

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3733

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SY
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS - COUNTRY EVALUATION PLAN FOR SYRIA

REF: A. STATE 134804; B. STATE 133681

1. REPORT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY REVIEWED BY CHARGE, PAO,
ACTING USAID DIRECTOR AND CONSULAR AND POLITICAL OFFICERS.
WE BELIEVE ARN HAS PREPARED EXCEPTIONALLY THOROUGH AND
ACCURATE REPORT AND HAVE ONLY THE FOLLOWING FEW SUGGESTED
CHANGES TO OFFER:

A. SECTION A, NUMBER 1, -- INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.
"THE GOVERNMENT ONLY VOLUNTARILY DIVULGES DETAILS ON THE
NUMBER AND IDENTITIES OF PEOPLE SO DETAINED, OR ON THE
CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THEM, ON RARE OCCASIONS WHEN IT
PUBLICIZES THE DETENTION AND TRIAL OF INDIVIDUALS ALLEGEDLY
INVOLVED IN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS AGAINST SENIOR SYRIAN
OFFICIALS AND IN OTHER ACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WHICH HAVE
POLITICAL OVERTONES.

"AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, IN ITS 1975-76 ANNUAL REPORT,
PLACED THE NUMBER OF PERSONS KNOWN TO BE DETAINED
WITHOUT TRAIL IN SYRIA AT 286, SOME OF WHO IT BELIEVED
HAS BEEN IN CUSTODY FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS. AI DESCRIBED
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03733 151028Z

THIS PRACTICE AS THE PREDOMINANT FEATURE OF THE HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION IN SYRIA. SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN ENDING
THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND IN PROMOTING STABILITY FOR THE SARKIS
GOVERNMENT HAS LED THE PREDOMINANTLY SYRIAN ARAB DETERRENT
FORCES IN LEBANON TO DETAIN SEVERAL THOUSAND PERSONS -- LARGELY
LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS -- WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS POSSIBLE
THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF LEBANON. THESE PRISONERS ARE

DETAINED WITHOUT TRAIL IN BOTH LEBANON AND SYRIA. AI
DESCRIBED THIS PRACTICE...

"THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS THAT PERSONS SUSPECTED OF
ESPIONAGE OR OTHER SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN
THREATENED WITH TORTURE OR, IN SOME CASES, ACTUALLY
TORTURED. WHILE RELIABLE EVIDENCE IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE
TO ACQUIRE, ALLEGATIONS OF MISTREATMENT IN SECURITY-RELATED
AND NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING CASES ARE FREQUENTLY HEARD AND
WIDELY BELIEVED IN DAMASCUS. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
EXPRESSED..."

B. NUMBER 2 - CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES

"ALTHOUGH THE COUNTRY IS PREDOMINANTLY SUNNI MUSLIM, ITS
CHRISTIAN, ALAWITE, DRUZE AND JEWISH MINORITIES ARE
PERMITTED TO PRACTICE THEIR FAITHS FREELY.

"THE GOVERNMENT OWNS AND CLOSELY SUPERVISES ALL
PUBLIC MEDIA.

"MORE RECENTLY, A SERIES OF UNPUBLICIZED HIGH-LEVEL
GOVERNMENT DECREES IN LATE 1976 AND 1977 HAVE
ELEMENATED MOST OFFICIALLY-SPONSORED FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST SYRI'S JEWISH COMMUNITY. UNDER THESE NEW
REGULATIONS, WHICH ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF BEING
IMPLEMENTED BY SYRIA'S OFTEN INEFFICIENT
BUREAUCRACY, JEWS ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED..."

2. WE ASSUME THIS REPORT IS BEING COORDINATED WITH THE
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 03733 151028Z

RELEVANT OFFICES OF AID AND USIS.
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